

Social
CABONHW058

73B'78

Brief to the Task Force on
Community & Social Services
S P R C of Hamilton and
District

HAMILTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

REFERENCE COLLECTION

URBAN/MUNICIPAL



3 2022 21292795 4



FOR USE IN LIBRARY ONLY

BRIEF TO THE TASK FORCE
ON
COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

A Staff Report
Approved by the
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
February 16, 1973

WARRINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

MAR 28 1973

71111


THE
**SOCIAL
PLANNING**

and

RESEARCH COUNCIL
of Hamilton and District

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1
Services for the Entire Community . .	4
Public Assistance and Income Support .	8
Rehabilitation	15
Research	18
The Design of the System	21
Conclusion	25
Bibliography	26



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Hamilton Public Library

INTRODUCTION

In July, 1972, the Hon. René Brunelle, Minister of Community and Social Services, announced the formation of the Task Force on Community and Social Services. The terms of reference for the Task Force are quite broad:

"to inquire into all matters pertaining to the management of the Ministry of Community and Social Services and related matters within Ontario, including:

- objectives and goals
- programs and their mode of delivery
- utilization of human resources
- organizational design and administrative procedures
- relationships with other ministries, governments, organizations and communities

to the extent that, in their opinion, is appropriate; and to make such recommendations that will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ministry in attaining its objectives and that will assist in the development of Community and Social Services for the people of Ontario."

Since its establishment, the Task Force has made known to various organizations, such as the Social Planning Councils in Ontario, its desire to receive briefs.

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District decided to make this submission to the Task Force, because of its interest in matters related to the Ministry and because it recognizes the importance of the governmental sector of the social welfare field. In fact, governmental expenditures in the field of social welfare

have come to dwarf those of the private sector.

The S.P.R.C. believes that one of the most useful roles to which the more limited resources available in the private sector can be put is in bringing to bear on the public sector different perspectives on and evaluations of the functioning of the public sector. This role is important for two reasons.

Government can only proceed so far in potentially controversial directions without some measure of community support. Agencies which attempt to be representative of large sectors of the community through their boards and membership may be able to initiate public discussion at the local level, and to help to rally such support when appropriate.

The other reason for the importance of the role of private agencies in concerning themselves with the public sector is that size, whether in public or private sectors, creates problems of its own in terms of ability to change and innovate. A dynamic force in the private sphere should therefore be seen as an important element for progress in the social welfare field.

The S.P.R.C. welcomes the invitation to submit this brief. The Council has in recent years, invested considerable time and energy in matters related to the

Ministry of Community and Social Services, such as poverty, day care, public assistance, information services, rehabilitation, and government work projects.

This report will begin with concerns about services for the entire community. It appears that these concerns are an appropriate place to begin because of new understandings of the role of social welfare in society. Following that section, the brief will focus on public assistance and income support, the major purpose of the Ministry at this time. Another important segment of the Ministry's responsibilities, rehabilitation, will come in for consideration next, followed by remarks on research. The brief then concludes by looking at some needed changes in the design of the system.

SERVICES FOR THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY

1) The Social Planning and Research Council's 1970 Brief to the Special Senate Committee on Poverty, described by Senator Croll and other senators as the best submission they received, suggested that the province pursue a philosophy which looks upon social welfare programs as programs for the entire community and that it move away from that perspective which sees social welfare programs for community casualties only.

For that reason, the Council is pleased with the broadened scope suggested by the change of name from the Department of Social and Family Services to the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The addition of the Youth and Recreation Branch from the Ministry of Education and the Citizenship Branch from the Department of the Provincial Secretary and Citizenship would appear to be a step in this direction.

Two other important considerations, from the perspective of looking at social welfare as a service for the entire community, are provision of information and a greater opportunity for citizens to participate in decision-making. Discussion of these matters follow.

2) The Brief to the Special Senate Committee on Poverty included information among the needed services for the entire community. With the proliferation of services in

the community, each serving particularly defined categories of people and relating to other services in the community with widely varying effectiveness, one of the major problems of the citizen today is that of finding the appropriate service to deal with his particular problem, needs and aspirations. Information services are, therefore, essential in helping the citizen through the maze of services.

Seeing this need, the Social Planning and Research Council undertook the responsibility of establishing the Hamilton and District Central Information Service. That agency has functioned independently, providing information services to the community, since January 1, 1971. Unfortunately, after two years of operation, grants from the province are uncertain in terms of amount and duration. The province is regarded as a 'one-third' financial partner along with the federal government and municipal sources, including the municipality and the United Appeal. As a result, a service such as this, among the most vital to the community, is literally fighting for its life.

The government must support development of information services throughout the province in order that the citizen can get the help he needs. It should make the financial commitment to this end.

In Hamilton and district, where the Central Information Service has operated so well over these past two years, developing a sizeable growing clientèle of citizens and professionals who rely on it and encourage others to do so, the community has expectations for service which must continue to be met. The province has the responsibility to see that expectations for this service are met. The Provincial Government should ensure the continuation of existing services at least until they make a decision about their long-term approach to information services.

3) The growth of the public field in social welfare in the past generation has been phenomenal. The change in name of the Ministry has been, in part, a recognition of this fact, and the conscious integration of other agencies into this ministry is further acknowledgement.

But one of the dangers to which some conservative thinkers point in the approach to social welfare which envisages the field as one for service to the entire community is the threat of social engineering, the possibility that some bureaucratic Big Brother at some distant location will make decisions affecting the intimate and varied details of the lives of people throughout the province. They fear that the plans, developed at the centre often many miles away, may not relate to the needs at the local level. At least in part, an answer to this kind of danger lies in the existence of strong private social planning organizations across the province.

Social planning councils can serve to focus on ways of applying provincial plans at the local level. They act as a constructive critic of the public sector and the rest of the private sector. They promote citizen participation in social policy, and they strengthen the private sector of social welfare with its important voluntary monetary and labour input. They enhance communication between local communities and government, and they promote decentralization of decision-making where possible and appropriate.

In the Council's Brief to the Special Senate Committee on Poverty, this agency's difficulty in carrying out demonstration projects and research was described. The key feature is the lack of funding sources. The poverty brief spoke to the desirability of federal funding being made available for such activities undertaken by social planning councils. The province also has an important stake in the work of social planning councils, as has been noted. For that reason, provincial funds should also be made available to social planning councils.

The Brief prepared by the Committee of Social Planning Councils of the Ontario Welfare Council to the Provincial Secretary for Social Development, Government of Ontario, entitled "The Funding of Social Planning Councils in Ontario", (Nov., 1972), is appropriate and

timely. Funding for this service which is geared to meet the needs of the entire community would appropriately come from the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND INCOME SUPPORT

4) One of the major obligations of the Ministry is in the area of income support. The S.P.R.C. believes that it should be a matter of public policy to bring allotments up to the poverty line and that the rate of increase in public assistance should not fall below the rate of increase in real personal income until that time.

In this matter, it is interesting that in each of the last two increases in Family Benefits, April 1, 1970, and January 1, 1973, the increases were to adjust grants upward only to keep pace with the cost of living. No consideration has been given to relating the increases to any poverty line or to the increase in real personal income.

The practice of the Ministry dooms recipients to a level of subsistence which, but for a very short time, constantly falls below the increases in the cost of living and which sees recipients falling further and further behind the rest of the population. A particularly undesirable feature of the recently announced increase in

payments is the fact that those on General Welfare Assistance* do not receive the increases beginning January 1, 1973.

Because of the low level of support offered by public assistance in Ontario, the amounts that recipients wishing to work may keep from their earnings should be increased.

5) From time to time, cases arise where it is economically to the advantage of a person not to be employed but rather to be in receipt of public assistance. In the S.P.R.C. Brief to the Special Senate Committee, it was found that among the "very poor" category, the category of income for families being \$1,000 or more below the poverty lines, just under half of the families were headed by wage and salary earners. If one considers that wages and salaries in Hamilton are relatively high, one might expect the proportion of the working force who are "very poor" to be greater outside the more industrialized and unionized areas of the province.

*People receive General Welfare Assistance before eligibility under Family Benefits is determined. In addition, persons not eligible for Family Benefits may be eligible for General Welfare Assistance. The General Welfare Assistance program is handled by municipal welfare departments, while Family Benefits is provincially administered. The following categories are entitled to General Welfare Assistance: a) persons out-of-work and looking for a job; b) a mother raising children alone; c) persons sick, disabled or blind; d) the elderly; e) foster parents. All but category a) are also eligible for Family Benefits.

It appears harsh to force a person on public assistance to take what amounts to a cut in income by going to a low-paying job. Those who choose to do so may feel very guilty about what they do to their families by taking a reduced income, and in fact it appears that this situation constitutes a strain on the families involved and an incentive to desert, as the families would generally be in better financial shape if the breadwinner did desert.

For these reasons, we believe that the Province of Ontario should pass legislation to take advantage of the Canada Assistance Plan in supplementing the incomes of those fully employed at jobs paying less than public assistance. Under the Canada Assistance Plan, 50% of the expenditures in such programs are paid by the federal government.

6) In determining the amount of public assistance allotments, the Ministry of Community and Social Services has a category in General Welfare called "pre-added budget" which covers food, clothing, and personal expenses. In Family Benefits, the "pre-added budget" consists of food, clothing, and "other living expenses".

The two "pre-added budget" categories can be made comparable because "other living expenses" consist of household supplies, personal needs, and utilities, and amounts are set for household supplies and utilities

under General Welfare. Thus, prior to the January, 1973, increase in Family Benefits, the unitemized lump sum allocations for food, clothing, and personal expenses have been generally the same, or at least, very close. The pre-added budget amount varies with age of family members and family size.

To our knowledge, the Ministry has refused to divulge the reasoning on which this pre-added budget figure is based. A refusal to make public this kind of information constitutes a barrier to the trust which citizens should be able to have in their government. The determination of need is a complex business, and the method of determination is important to a large number of people, especially those on public assistance. The public should be satisfied that the reasoning behind the pre-added budget figures is sound, but the public cannot be satisfied if the government refuses to make the reasoning known.

7) One measure that has been useful in assisting low income families especially, has been the provision of a subsidy to pay for child care in day nurseries. However, the regulations under the Day Nurseries Act sometimes make it impossible to provide subsidy in cases where financial need does appear to exist.

In some cases, single parents might be ineligible for subsidy even at an income level where paying for day care would leave them no better off than if they were on

public assistance. Families who have avoided going into debt may not receive subsidy in circumstances where families with debts may receive it, raising some questions of social policy which at least require some careful thought and resolution.

For these reasons, we urge the Ministry to study the effect of the regulations under the Day Nurseries Act and to modify them if necessary to ensure that day care is made increasingly accessible to families with lower income.

8) Periods of heavy unemployment are times when government at various levels gives thought to make-work projects of various sorts. The federal government has had Opportunities for Youth and the Local Initiatives Program. Ontario has had Project 500. The Social Planning and Research Council has had experience with all of these programs, including the Ministry's Project 500.

One of the central problems with these programs is that while they are frequently promoted as being programs to meet the needs of the disadvantaged they often provide employment for people who are middle class or at least upwardly striving, in short, people who will probably "make it" with or without help of such programs.

In some ways, Project 500 appeared to be utilizing the middle class kind of young person but treating projects to which they were assigned as if these youngsters

were doing tasks of an unskilled nature. While projects might require some continuity of labour input, and while certain skills might be necessary for particular jobs, those that were discharged or quit were not replaced, and selection for specific jobs was somewhat haphazard, with little chance to screen.

If make-work projects are to fulfil their objectives, then it is necessary that they be aimed more deliberately at those who are less likely to succeed without the help of such programs.

9) One of the major problems in the field of public assistance is the failure of the general public and of those with power and influence in the community to understand and appreciate the importance of the public assistance program, the problems of the Ministry and of its clients, and the needs and aspirations of those whose lives are touched by public assistance programs. An important task of any agency is one of interpretation of its functions and responsibilities to the general public. It appears that in this regard the Ministry has fallen far short of its obligations. One has the impression that little time and effort is given to this important task of public education. The problem of bridging this important information gap must undoubtedly be taken up in a variety of ways.

The Social Planning and Research Council has worked for establishment of a program to create greater awareness of problems of welfare through home visits with caseworkers. The plan is that people from the community will accompany the caseworkers (one person per caseworker) on home visits in order to learn something about public assistance and public assistance recipients. The regional office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services has indicated a willingness to implement such a program on an experimental basis, and the S.P.R.C. is currently involved in contacting client groups to recruit clients willing to be visited in this program.

The S.P.R.C. sees a need for such public educational programs throughout the province as an integral and highly important part of the activities of the Ministry.

10) The Social Planning and Research Council believes that public assistance programs at all levels should involve citizen committees and advisory boards on which recipients are included. The Ministry should require such committees in any municipal programs funded in any part by the province and should establish such committees and advisory boards itself in areas where it has the responsibility. Problems of public assistance should be seen as problems of the entire community requiring the input of all segments of the community, including recipients.

The S.P.R.C. has made representations to the Wentworth County Social Services Committee to involve recipients either on the Committee or on an advisory body. The Committee chose not to do so. For three years in a row, the Council has also urged the Hamilton Board of Control to have recipient involvement on the Hamilton Public Welfare Board. They have so far declined to take any action.

REHABILITATION

11) In the S.P.R.C. study, Rehabilitation Services in Hamilton and District, (1971), many people interviewed reported that there are often delays before people are seen by a counsellor from the Vocational Rehabilitation Branch. For that reason, and because similar problems may exist elsewhere in the Province, the Council reiterates its recommendation that the Ministry examine its staffing patterns in Vocational Rehabilitation to ensure that planning for disabled persons may start as early as possible.

12) The Council believes that the future of unemployable disabled persons should be no less a concern to the community than that of the disabled for whom employment is a realistic objective. For that reason, the S.P.R.C. urges the Task Force to consider whether the Ministry should offer financial

support to programs through which the social, recreational, cultural, and educational needs of disabled people may be met. The Ministry should consider as well, ways of proceeding with development of multi-purpose centres for the aged, providing day care, recreation, counselling, meals, etc., throughout the province.

13) The funding of various children's institutions under the Children's Institutions Act, the Charitable Institutions Act, and the Homes for Retarded Persons Act is through the Ministry. The criteria for funding are rather vague, and the result at the local level is that various agencies and groups develop group homes of various sorts for funding from various sources, competing with one another for limited resources and avoiding the necessity for any overall community assessment of priorities in child care facilities. In addition, facilities for the severely emotionally disturbed are funded through the Ministry of Health.

As an alternative to this kind of unplanned development, the Council recommends either establishing some set of Provincial priorities in this field or the insistence on the development of such priorities locally as a pre-requisite for funding additional institutions. This priority development should include the Ministry of Correctional Services. Agreement on such a direction would also need to be worked out among the three Ministries involved.

14) Currently, Visiting Homemaker service is an allowable expense for the municipal public assistance agency on a part time basis. In the light of the philosophy of the Ministry of Health emphasizing the importance of services that are less intensive where possible, it seems advisable that Visiting Homemaker service be covered by public assistance on a full-time basis where needed.

15) Elderly and disabled persons are hindered in taking advantage of educational, social and recreational activities and in carrying on such functions as shopping, going to receive medical services, etc. simply because of the lack of appropriately designed transportation. For that reason, the Government should encourage through special grants, transportation services at local levels for the handicapped and elderly, to be used on an ability-to-pay basis.

16) Public assistance or some other programs in Ontario should cover the drug and health aids costs for aged persons in receipt of public assistance or on marginal incomes.

RESEARCH

The Ministry has in the past been involved in the analysis of programs and has also provided funding to outside researchers. This effort is laudable, but it is clear that much more remains to be done in the area of research. In this section, the S.P.R.C. points to particular areas of research that merit consideration.

17) Research in the field of public assistance is especially sparse in Canada. More needs to be done in this area, and public assistance agencies are the obvious bodies to take on the bulk of the responsibility. Unfortunately, some agencies do not make public vital research that they do, and that kind of research is in reality a disservice to the Canadian public. Scarce research funds are spent to learn things for which other scarce research funds must again be spent. The result is a knowledge bottleneck, curtailing development in the social welfare field.

The Social Planning and Research Council is currently completing a report on single young people on public assistance in Hamilton, and the Ministry assisted by the provision of manpower under the Project 500 program. When the report is completed, it will be made available to the public.

The Council especially welcomes the upcoming research on guaranteed income which the Ministry is planning. This is a vital area. The S.P.R.C. sees in addition the need for the following kinds of research to be undertaken:

- . Career patterns of public assistance families.
- . Efficacy of different approaches to problems of families.
- . Characteristics of public assistance recipients
- . The extent of fraud and incorrect payment amounts. The S.P.R.C. Brief to the Special Senate Committee on Poverty reported on studies done in the United States, in the absence of Canadian material, and these found low rates of fraud but sometimes fairly sizeable rates of incorrect payment.
- . Quality control of caseloads and rate of return compared to the cost of additional investigation through use of different intensity of control.
- . Administrative procedures related to application and payment.
- . Adequacy of public assistance grants. In this regard, as noted above, it appears that the Government has chosen to hinder research and public comment in this area by refusing to make public the basis on which the figures for the pre-added budget are determined.
- . Quality of service, as varied by municipality, in general welfare assistance.

18) The Vocational Rehabilitation Branch should carry out a survey of disabled people whom it has served over a period of time, to determine whether the training programs they have gone through have been successful and whether any changes are indicated in the criteria by which employment is established as an appropriate objective of the rehabilitation process for the individual.

This research is especially important because of the high rate of unemployment which Canada has experienced in recent times and because of increasing automation. Consideration needs to be given to the question as to whether clients are getting employment, or whether money and time are being expended to little result, in the process dashing the hopes of those engaged in retraining.

19) Immigration is a major fact of life in Ontario, which receives the bulk of new immigrants to Canada. There is a need for more research about immigrants, for instance, about their use of social services. The Ministry's Citizenship Branch might well concern itself with research in this area. The S.P.R.C. has developed a design for such a study which with some modification it hopes to be able to put into effect.

20) The Ministry of Community and Social Services provides funding for Legal Aid programs. Certain kinds of research are lacking in the field of Legal Aid. One thinks specifically of research to answer the following questions: When they are in circumstances in which Legal Aid might be available, how many people do not become aware that they might be eligible? If they do become aware that they may be eligible, how many do not apply? If they apply, how many do not receive assistance? How many people who are served by Legal Aid are dissatisfied with the treatment they receive? What are the reasons for dissatisfaction?

What do those served tell others who might need such help? All of these questions are dealt with in a research design which the Social Planning and Research Council is prepared to apply at such time as funding is available.

21) It appears that the Ministry does not give adequate recognition to the importance of research as a tool in policy-making. An example is the policy permitting municipal public welfare agencies to exercise discretion in granting or withholding assistance to young people under 18 away from home. As far as we know, no study was made beforehand, as to the extent of inappropriate use of assistance by such young people, and no study has been made after the change in policy to explore the consequences of this change.

THE DESIGN OF THE SYSTEM

22) This Brief spoke on page 16 about the desirability of coordination in the area of youth homes. It was pointed out that this coordination requires cooperation among the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Correctional Services. The Ministry of Community and Social Services might well give leadership in this field as well as others which the Task Force may uncover.

23) Boards of Education in Ontario are carrying out or considering pre-kindergarten programs for 4-year olds. Programs carried on under the aegis of Boards of Education are exempted from the provisions of the Day Nurseries Act. As a consequence, the requirements for group programs for 4-year olds, would differ depending on whether the child attends a program offered by a day nursery or one offered by a Board of Education. Such factors as the teacher-child ratio, teacher training, space, equipment, and inspection by outside authorities might well affect the value of the experience for the child.

For these reasons, the S.P.R.C. recommends that the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Education together consider whether a single set of criteria should be established for programs in the field of pre-kindergarten education.

24) It has become apparent that there is a great deal of uncertainty within the Ministry about the different kinds of responsibility in the field of community development that are appropriate for different divisions of the Ministry. There is also uncertainty about community development responsibilities among Ministries. Although the S.P.R.C. is aware that, at least in the Hamilton region, efforts are under way to work some of these matters out, this confusion detracts from the potential effectiveness of the Ministry's efforts.

25) There are several branches within the Ministry each giving relatively small grants for various citizen participation programs. There is uncertainty among those applying for grants as to where to go for a particular kind of grant, and apparently there is confusion within the Ministry as well. Perhaps some consideration could be given to some consolidation of those sections of the Ministry providing such grants.

26) The current division of public assistance in Ontario into a provincial program and innumerable municipal programs should be abolished. The quality of service offered varies widely, along with the entitlements of recipients, and questions have been raised as to how the province can justify such a state of affairs. Beginning January 1, 1973, the province is setting different rates of payment to recipients of provincial welfare and those of municipal welfare. Again, question must be raised as to the basis for justifying such a situation.

The existence of a variety of municipal welfare offices each with its own regulations and entitlements is also inappropriate because poverty is not simply a local phenomenon. People move from area to area looking for work and seeking to escape from poverty, and therefore some areas are burdened with the need to support recipients who have moved from other areas.

The S.P.R.C. reiterates its recommendation to the Croll Committee that the province consider two possible alternatives to the current hodge-podge of municipal welfare and provincial public assistance: abolition of municipal welfare departments and placing their functions under the Ministry; or establishment of a series of regional departments, with all operating functions subject to the regulations of a single provincial agency, the Ministry.

Consolidation of public assistance in Ontario would also serve to make more feasible the elimination across the board of various practices which tend to degrade recipients, practices such as taking license plates away, holding interviews under unfavourable conditions, and asking recipients to be available for home visits over extended periods of time. These practices do occur in some localities, but it is the position of the S.P.R.C. that they should be abolished.

CONCLUSION

The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District welcomes the Hon. René Brunelle's decision to set up the Task Force on Community and Social Services. The Council believes that there are a variety of matters under the Ministry's jurisdiction that could benefit from thoughtful consideration. It is for that reason that the Council has put forth its views on issues that relate to the Ministry. It is hoped that the Task Force and the Ministry will find ways to implement the changes recommended.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Documents of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District

Brief to the Special Senate Committee on Poverty, Vol.I,
March 12, 1970; Volumes II and III, November 5, 1970.

Day Care Needs of Children in Hamilton and District
July, 1971.

Developing Neighbourhood Services. Report of a Two-Year
Demonstration Project, Community Services Centre,
Burlington, Ontario. January 19, 1968.

"Doing Your Own Thing" : The Opportunities for Youth
Experience, Hamilton, 1971.

Final Report of the Task Force on Public Assistance
June, 1972.

Rehabilitation Services in Hamilton and District, May, 1971.

Report of the Ways and Means Committee on Developing
Neighbourhood Services, March, 1969.

Other Documents

Committee of Social Planning Councils of the Ontario Welfare
Council. The Funding of Social Planning Councils in
Ontario. Presented to the Secretary for Social Development
of the Ontario Government on November 14, 1972.

Section on Aging of the Ontario Welfare Council.
Report of the Health Aids Committee, February, 1971.

URBAN/M